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Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development

Written statement* submitted by Chant du guépard dans le désert, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement, which is hereby circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[30 January 2018]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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Conviction of Turkish Dam and its Impact on Increasing Haze in the Islamic Republic of Iran

Dear president of the council
With great regards, we would like to inform you that the Republic of Turkey has built a big number of dams in the southern Anatolian Basin and the sources of Tigris and Euphrates over the past two decades. The capacity of only one of these giant structures, the Atatürk Dam on the Euphrates which was completed in 1992, reaches 48 billion cubic meters. Moreover, construction of Ilisu dam with a capacity of 10.4 billion cubic meters on top of Tigris River has been started since December 2014.

The construction of these dams has severely influenced and damaged the aquatic system of the two great rivers of Tigris and Euphrates, causing the abandonment of several million hectares of agricultural land in the Syrian and Iraqi countries, and creating a serious crisis in downstream of Hoor-al-azim; a crisis that has changed the strategic harbor of Hoor-al-azimin to the largest crisis center of dust storms in the region.

The indigenous communities and people of Syria, Iraq, and Iran which are the origins of the world's oldest civilizations, such as the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Syrian Arab Republic and Mesopotamia, are seriously affected by the devastating effects of these dams.

Nowadays, in many parts of Iran, the crisis of dust storm has caused a lot of damage to the environment as well as the lives of the citizens and has changed into a very serious threat. Recently, according to a report published by the Environmental Bureau of Ahwaz (one of the southern provinces of Iran), on January 19, 2018, the dust concentration in Ahwaz was 8056 mcg / m3. In fact, at the moment, the concentration of dust in Ahwaz is 36.92 times the limit, which is very alarming and a serious environmental threat with human rights dimensions.

Although the environmental crises of the region have several causes, in such a situation, the continuous destructive processes of making dams by the Turkish government and control of the waters of these two rivers have created and intensified the dust phenomenon in the west of Iran, apart from the destruction of agriculture and the thirst of villages and cities in Mesopotamia; this devastating process does not only threaten people's health and their productive as well as everyday activities, but also leads abandonment of human settlements.
The devastating outcomes of the Turkish dam-building have not only aggravated the humanitarian disasters caused by the Syria and Iraq wars and threatened human rights, but also clearly contradict the provisions of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Indigenous People.

In the past three years and following the increasing concerns, Iran's environmentalists have written a letter to the UN Secretary-General calling for a review of the Turkish government's efforts to remove the legitimate rights of Iraq and Syria on water; measures that have also affected Iran by the dust caused due to drying the wetlands of these countries.

We believe that Turkey does not respect the downstream limit and has caused the drying up of ecosystems in Iraq and Syria by building numerous dams over the Tigris and Euphrates. This is while, in the current situation, Iraq and Syria cannot take serious actions and claim their water share from Turkey due to the insecurity in their countries.

The Chico Environmental Institute, on behalf of a large number of environmentalists and people in Iran, as well as human rights organizations as well as environmental organizations, calls on the Human Rights Council to take serious action to address this challenge. Since it is not possible to determine boundaries for the environment, it is our responsibility to engage and take serious action to prevent the occurrence of arbitrary and trans boundary environmental crises.